Full Stream Ahead

News and highlights from Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management

August 2003

Bair Ranch Research Project - Montana

Sandy Wyman, Rangeland Management Specialist, toured the Bair Ranch Low Moisture Supplement/Herding Research Project with Dr. Derek Bailey, MSU Research Station, Havre, MT, and Bob Welling, Research Support Manager, Ridley Block Operations. Located east of White Sulphur Springs, this project is in the second year of a three year study designed to evaluate the use of supplements and herding on livestock distribution. Sixty first-calf heifers are split into three groups, in 3 paddocks, for one month (July 15-August 15), within the 4000 acres Lake Pasture on the North Fork of the Musselshell River. One group serves as a control with no herding or low moisture supplements. The second is a herd only group, and the third is herded in addition to livestock behavior being manipulated with low moisture supplements. The control and management groups are rotated to a different paddock each year of the study.

Stubble heights are collected on all herbaceous species within a 1 x ½ meter plot located within ½ meter of the green line. Incidence of use is collected on woody species along 20 meter transects. Fecal material is also evaluated to calculate dry matter. In the first year of the study more forage was left on streambanks and riparian areas in pastures where cattle were late-day herded, especially when integrated with strategic placement of supplements. Low moisture supplements and low stress livestock handling are two methods that look promising for altering livestock behavior. Enhancing distribution to areas that are typically underutilized by livestock will help improve or maintain resource conditions in both the uplands and riparian areas. For more information contact Sandy Wyman at (541) 416-6886 or swyman@or.blm.gov.

Livestock behavior altered through the use of low moisture supplements. Crystalyx HE-20 formulation used for this study.

Calf using low moisture supplement

GPS unit provides livestock movement information

Training in Browse Evaluation by Analysis of Growth Form – Prineville, OR.

Twenty people from state and federal agencies and the private sector, attended a training session conducted by Richard Keigley (USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT) to become familiar with a method he has developed titled Browse Evaluation by Analysis of Growth Form. The architecture-based browse evaluation method applies to trees and shrubs that grow through the browse zone (1.5 to 2.5 m, depending on which ungulates are present). The method can be used to document any trend (positive, negative, stable—both healthly and degraded). On sites that have experienced an increase in browsing pressure, older shrubs would have retrogressed-type architecture (older aspen would have uninterrupted-growth type), while younger plants would have arrested-type architecture. On sites that have experienced a decrease in browsing pressure, older (released-type) plants would show evidence of past intense browsing, while younger plants would have uninterrupted-growth type architecture. Exclosures, especially paired exclosures with tall game-proof cells and shorter livestock-proof cells, offer excellent opportunities to assess browse conditions.

The group also discussed the reconstruction of browse histories on willow and aspen communities, with many questions for Richard including the amount of observer variability in determining the age of a tree or shrub using terminal bud scars. He has agreed to conduct an observer variability study next summer with help from participants of this course. He also plans to document the set of rules for this methodology as an update of the book *Browse Evaluation by Analysis of Growth Form Volume 1: Methods for Evaluating Condition and Trend* by Richard and Michael Frisina, (1998). For more information contact Sandy Wyman at (541) 416-6886 or swyman@or.blm.gov.

Grazing Management for Riparian Areas Training Course – Afton, WY

The Grazing Management for Riparian Areas Training Cadre conducted a session in Afton, WY, August 12-14. This 3-day format requires the sponsors to assemble a diverse group comprising several teams who then develop compatible grazing management strategies using an actual ranch/allotment situation. The Afton course was sponsored by the Bridger-Teton National

Forest. Twenty-seven people attended including permittees, state and federal agency personnel, private consultants, and other interested individuals. The Salt River Pass Allotment Complex was used for the class exercise in developing management alternatives in a collaborative group setting. Participant feedback from this session was very positive. To find out more about sponsoring a riparian grazing course, contact Sandy Wyman at (541) 416-6886 or swyman@or.blm.gov.

Sawtooth National Recreation Area Service Trip

Between August 26-28, 2003 members of the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) met in Challis, Idaho, with diverse interests concerned about stream and riparian-wetland management on the East Fork of the Salmon River in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA). Livestock management was a primary issue. The purpose of the service trip was to provide a second opinion regarding the condition of the riparian-wetland areas in the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotments, to discuss findings with diverse stakeholders, and to recommend management and monitoring options.

Livestock grazing has been an important historical activity in this area for many decades, but more recently has faced many changed conditions. Most notably, a recent court ordered decision regarding livestock-wolf conflicts has forced the USDA Forest Service to revisit their allotment management plans in relation to key SNRA values and produce a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by September 2003. While the team's involvement helped bring diverse interests together to begin building a foundation for communication, understanding and potentially the creation of a shared vision for this area, it came quite late in the process leading to a Record of Decision.

Resource concerns discussed included riparian-wetland potential, stringer meadows, hummocking, bluegrass islands within riparian areas, livestock impacts at primary recreation sites, wildlife use, and grazing implementation monitoring following the PACFISH and INFISH Implementation Monitoring Program Manual (for more information see http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/teams/fisheries/pac_infish).

When deciding what parameters to monitor for grazing implementation, the NRST recommends evaluating the following five items, and determining which address the riparian-wetland and stream condition in need of improvement or protection:

1. Residual vegetation height (stubble height) on **key riparian-wetland species** on the greenline (stubble height on key species, not the average height on all herbaceous species).

2. Stubble height on slightly higher elevation, dryer riparian islands such as Kentucky bluegrass islands away from the greenline, **and** percent groundcover.

3. Riparian woody browse **incidence of use** on key species (trees and shrubs).

4. Streambank alteration as a result of livestock grazing (bank trampling).

5. Stubble height on selected herbaceous species and/or incidence of use on key woody species in upland settings, such as special threatened and endangered species or regenerating quaking aspen where they need special concern and attention.

The team's participation in this service trip was a learning experience. It reinforced the importance of engaging diverse interests early in decision-making processes, at a point where there is still opportunity for meaningful joint fact finding, problem definition and solution development by all stakeholders. For the team, it confirmed the importance of conducting interviews with a variety of players to get a better sense of the issues, objectives, and whether NRST involvement is appropriate. The team will follow-up with the SNRA and others to stay informed of the outcomes.

BLM Executive Leadership Team Briefing – Casper, YW

Wayne Elmore (retired NRST Team Leader) and Laura Van Riper (NRST Social Scientist) were asked to participate on a "Best Practices" panel at a recent meeting of the BLM's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), focusing on partnerships and collaboration. The invitation came because the Creeks and Communities strategy has demonstrated success not only in terms of on-the-ground results, but also in terms of providing a model for adaptive management when it comes to partnership building. To lay a foundation for discussion among other panel members and the audience, Laura presented the elements of the strategy and a synopsis of the recent program evaluation findings, highlighting what has worked and some of the changes being made to increase effectiveness. She also reviewed some of the institutional barriers to making the necessary adjustments. This set the stage for a discussion about what the NRST is doing to address these barriers, and also some of the things that agency leaders can do to not only enhance the team's efforts, but to better support innovative approaches to collaborative stewardship across the agency.

Riparian Workshop 2003

The 2003 Riparian Network Workshop will be held at the BLM National Training Center (NTC) in Phoenix, Arizona. The hotel listed below is within walking distance to NTC. Shuttle service from the airport to the hotel is available from Super Shuttle.

There is no fee to attend the workshop, however, travelers are responsible for their own travel costs and arrangements. If you plan on attending please email Carol Connolly.

A block of rooms for NRST has been reserved at the following hotel:

Four Points by Sheraton Phoenix MetroCenter Hotel
10220 North Metro Parkway East
Phoenix, AZ 85051

Phone: (602) 997-5900

Reservations must be made by November 3, 2003